

St. Louis Region Captures Prestigious Abilene Trophy

March 15 2013 4:21 PM

*Award Recognizes the Tremendous Regional Support
Provided for the Air Mobility Command Unit at Scott Air Force Base*



The St. Louis Region has been selected as the winner of the prestigious Air Mobility Command Community Support Award for the extensive support demonstrated for the airmen of Scott Air Force Base, and their families, during 2012. Also known as the Abilene Trophy, the highly coveted award is presented annually to recognize the

community that provides the finest support to an Air Mobility Command unit. The Leadership Council Southwestern Illinois spearheaded this year's nomination on behalf of the St. Louis region, but it was the wealth of supporting information that flowed in from across the metro area that produced the true victory.

“We couldn't have done it without the contributions from the various individuals, businesses, organizations and sports teams we reached out to, who told us what their organization or community did to support the base last year, and the dozens of letters of endorsement from local, state and federal legislators and regional businesses that helped to make our case,” noted Ellen Krohne, executive director of the Leadership Council. “The overwhelming response to our region-wide call for information demonstrated the depth of our region's commitment to Scott AFB and was instrumental in our ability to develop a winning package. This truly is a victory that we all can be proud of.”

The nomination showcased over 270 examples of community help for the airmen and their families, including;

- donations of furniture, presents, diapers and other necessities, including \$496,843 in documented material aid to the air units at Scott AFB that came from H.E.R.O.E. S. Care alone;
- creation and maintenance of the Regional Alliance for the Troops website (www.rafft.org), through which almost 7,000 military members and their families accessed key resources during 2012;
- recognition from major league teams like the Cardinals and the Rams, as well as high school sports teams that brought the airmen and their families on the field to honor them;
- discounts on various events and attractions;
- hosting and financially supporting dozens of events offering opportunities for civilian/military interaction, and
- countless other examples of the financial, physical and emotional support provided throughout the year.

Representatives from the Abilene Trophy selection committee cited how well the region told its story, and the excellent supporting documentation provided as factors that propelled St. Louis into the winners' circle among the eight communities vying for the 2012 award.

The surprise announcement was made by General Paul J. Selva, Commander of the Air Mobility Command at Scott AFB, during a special reception welcoming him and his wife to the base and to the St. Louis region.

The Leadership Council co-hosted the event with Civic Progress, The St. Louis Regional Chamber, The Regional Business Council and the Belle Scott Committee, all of whom Krohne credits with encouraging their members to take the time to submit information on how they support the Air Mobility Command Unit for inclusion in the nomination. The reception was attended by dozens of community members who had turned out to meet the General and his wife, and erupted into cheers and applause when the General shared the exciting news. Surrounded by representatives of the businesses, organizations and communities that deliver their support to Scott Air Force Base every day, the event was the ideal occasion for the announcement.

"Everyone in the community around Scott Air Force Base had a part in making this happen," said General Selva. He complemented the region on its "world class" support and dedication to the airmen and base. "It is your hospitality that makes us comfortable that when we go out and do hard things, that when we deploy, when we are gone from home, that you will take care of our families and you will take care of the Airmen we leave behind."

Also on-hand for the announcement was Col. Dave Almand, 375th Air Mobility Wing Commander, who was as delighted as the others in attendance by the surprise announcement.

"The region's support of Scott is by far among the best in the Air Force and the Defense Department., and we are thrilled to be able to recognize the greater St. Louis metro region with this award," noted Col. Almand. "The Leadership Council, area civic leaders, communities, businesses, and military supportive organizations all joined forces to put together a competitive package that clearly shows the good things they do for Scott, our service members and our families. The Abilene Trophy is an amazing opportunity for us to say thanks and to show our appreciation. Scott would not be able to carry out its missions without the region's supporters and now they get an award they can see and hold that reminds them what they do matters."

The official presentation of the Abilene Trophy will take place at a community-wide celebration that is currently being planned for sometime this spring.

"We're so blessed to have Scott Air Force Base in our region, and our communities benefit every day from its presence and the presence of the airmen and their families, so it's always been our honor to support them," noted Gerry Schuetzenhofer, chairman of the Leadership Council's Military Affairs Committee. "We are looking forward to a huge turnout to celebrate this victory with our friends and colleagues at Scott."

About the Abilene Award

The AMC Community Support Award was established on 1 January 1999 by the Military Affairs Committee of Abilene, Texas, and the United States Air Force Air Mobility Command. The award is presented annually by the Abilene Chamber of Commerce (ACOC) Military Affairs Committee and the Commander, Air Mobility Command to a civilian community for outstanding support to a nearby AMC base. The award is sponsored by the ACOC Military Affairs Committee, and administered jointly by the committee and the Air Mobility Command Office of Public Affairs. The award is to provide recognition for activities conducted between January and December of the preceding year. The City of Abilene is not eligible to receive this award. For more information, contact Debra Morotini at the Abilene Chamber of Commerce at (325) 677-7241 or at dmorotini@abilenechamber.com.

About the Leadership Council

The Leadership Council Southwestern Illinois is a member-based, economic development corporation representing Madison and St. Clair counties. The Council works to unite business, industry, government, education and labor for economic growth in Southwestern Illinois. These effective partnerships serve as a driving force behind successful economic development efforts throughout the Metro East region. www.leadershipcouncilswil.com.